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things imaginable. He comes down to breakfast in knee-breeches, silk stockings and shoes with large buckles and the funniest sorts of coats. He is decidedly eccentric. His house at Chelsea is called 'the White House,' and is painted in the most abominable colors. It is really an eyesore, but Cousin James thinks it is very artistic. You would never imagine that he was an American. He and all his brothers are thorough Johnnie Bulls. He was born in Baltimore, and the Whistlers that are in the army are our relatives. One brother in London is quite a famous doctor, but is totally dissimilar in taste and habits to Cousin James."

* * *

Greater persons than his California cousin set higher store upon Mr. Whistler, however. The purchase of his "Portrait of My Mother" by the French Government, for the Luxembourg, is a significant commentary on the estimation in which his art is held by those who know what art is. Apropos of Whistler, Mr. G. W. Smalley, in the *Tribune*, recently recorded another of those outbreaks of his which, for all the eccentricity on their surface, have always a solid foundation of sound sense. "Mr. Whistler," writes Mr. Smalley, "has had the courage to tackle the picture dealer, a personage now all but supreme in the world of art. He writes to the press that the canvas shown as a completed work of his by Messrs. Dowdeswell, representing three draped figures in a conservatory, is a painting long ago barely begun and thrown aside for destruction. 'I think it not only just to myself,' adds Mr. Whistler, 'to make this statement, but right that the public should be warned against the possible purchase of a picture in no way representative, and, in its actual state, absolutely worthless.' These be brave words, my masters. The firm in question is what is called a respectable firm; not of the highest rank, if rank is to be measured by the greatness of the sums they habitually bid at Christie's, or by a resolve to drive all private purchasers away from the auction room and compel them to come to the dealer himself and pay the dealer's price. That is not the specialty of this particular firm. But they are important enough to make Mr. Whistler's defiance of them an act very creditable to him. They have often exhibited for him in times past; theirs is the gallery where people might naturally expect to find such an artist as Mr. Whistler."

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The ovation to Mr. Whistler planned by his artist friends in London took place a short time ago after much preparation. The artists came in force and presented to their guest a parchment bearing 100 signatures and offering "greeting to James M'Neil Whistler, Esq., from his fellow-members of the Chelsea Arts Club, a record of their high appreciation of the distinguished honor that has come to him by the placing of his mother's portrait in the national collection of France." In the course of his speech of thanks Mr. Whistler took the opportunity to remark that "at such a time of peace, following in the wake of the struggles and difficulties one encounters through life, it was right to bury the hatchet—in the side of the enemy, and leave it to think of him no more." He said also: "I am pleased to be thus distinguished at the beginning of my career, for, you know, an artist's career always begins to-morrow." Mr. Whistler has made another of the "Songs on Stone" which he undertook a year ago for the erratic paper called *The Whirlwind* published by two feather-brained young English politicians. *The Whirlwind* having spent itself, the present lithograph is issued as a supplement to the first number of a new English monthly, *The Albemarle*. It is a hasty sketch of a London clothes-shop with children playing before its windows, a mere fragment, but characteristic, and, as an autograph-plate, worth ten times the price of the magazine, sixpence. Amateurs who are wise will send at once for it to the publishers, Swan, Sonnenschein & Co., Paternoster Square, E. C. The "Songs" published in *The Whirlwind* are all out of print. They sold originally for a penny, but now bring guineas. They are printed in black, but it is rumored that Mr. Whistler has fathomed the mysteries of color lithography, and that some essays in that art will appear before long bearing the familiar sign of the butterfly. Mr. Whistler is to have an exhibition of his works in London this winter. It will bring forward many pictures that have not been seen in public before.

The sale of paintings by Franz Courtens, of Brussels, at the Fifth Avenue Galleries, was as near an absolute failure as possible. There were fifty marines, landscapes and landscapes with figures, all bright and fresh, on new canvases and in new frames. For one thing, there were too many of them at once; for another, they were not shown long enough and advertised enough. And above all, they were in the hands of a Cheap John chromo house that made an advertisement out of them at the expense of the unfortunate artist. It is a pity, for really Courtens is a clever painter in the dashingly popular style of Fortuné's day.

TEA-ROOT CARVINGS

(Special Correspondence of THE COLLECTOR.)

AMOY, CHINA. January 15th, 1892.

FOR more than a hundred generations, there has been a guild of artists in this populous province of Fo-kien whose life-work is the conversion of the gnarled and interlaced roots of the tea tree into things of beauty, that is, beauty from a celestial point of view. The herb whose leaves gladden western palates in the form of Oolong, Hyson and Souchong is a hardy plant and takes a firm hold on mother earth. Its roots seem to have no regular law of growth. Sometimes they develop very much as a beard sprouts from the chin; at others they separate and move along parallel lines as if they were a lignose centipede. In general it may be said that they make one large, clumsy mass from which shoot out any where from three to thirty rootlets. Their surface is never smooth, but always irregularly corrugated. The value of a root depends upon its size, its outline, its freedom from decay and its suggestiveness of some everyday object. It is rare that a main root or root-mass is more than six inches in diameter. Such belong to trees ranging in age from thirty years to a century. Infrequently they attain to twelve and fifteen inches, and are then said by Chinese experts to be four and five hundred years old.

The roots are dug from the soil, and allowed to thoroughly dry in the open air under a shed or else in a moderately warm room. The loose earth is carefully removed, as is the loose bark and all pieces decayed, cracked or worm-eaten. The artist then determines what it is to be. The favorite types are dragons, buffalos, cows, carnivores, bears, mandarins, priests, howling dervishes, dancers or mythic heroes. If the root cannot be worked into one of these shapes, it is converted into a pedestal or platform for a figure piece. The primary operation consists in sawing it into rough shape. This is done with a fine cross-cut, and the clean edges removed by rubbing them on tiles or bricks. Sometimes a root is bent, by softening it with steam or boiling-water and then twisting it in any desired direction.

Now comes the hardest task of all. The most valued piece is that which shows no art and seems perfectly natural. The carver goes over the block removing here a fibre and there a set of roots, here thinning out one on the under side and forcing it down and there burning another and expanding it at the burned point. I have one in my drawing-room which is a capital figure of a dragon, rearing and opening his jaws as if to spring upon his prey. Careful examination shows that nothing has been added to the mass, but that hundreds of fibres, knots and corrugations have been skilfully removed.

In nearly every instance, a human figure made in the same manner, or carved from a wood of the same color, or else made partly from tea-roots and partly from carved wood is added to the first piece. The designs are endless in this field. Learned men lecturing birds, mandarins standing on dragons, boys riding cows and other ridiculous quadrupeds, dancing beggars, men fighting each other are the commonest groups, but of the more uncommon there are thousands. One famous artist in Foochow claims to have produced with the aid of his apprentices over fifty thousand different designs, and judging from his stock on hand, his claim seems reasonable enough.

The tea-root carvings are seldom very costly, running from fifty cents to one hundred dollars. Nine-tenths bring less than \$2 each. A handsome set of a dozen can be purchased for \$20; which will decorate a drawing-room or hall better than bric-a-brac many times more expensive. The figures are strong, durable and in no danger of fracture by Bridget or Ah Sin. Outside of their esthetic value, they are of interest in showing the wonderful ingenuity and economy of our Chinese cousins.

WILLIAM E. S. FALES.

Some prices at a recent London sale were: Walton and Cotton's "Complete Angler," in the original boards, £5 7s. 6d.; first edition of Leigh Hunt's "The Town," in original cloth, £5 5s.; Coleridge's "Poetical Works," some first editions, £16 10s.; first edition of Bewick's "British Birds," large paper, £6 10s.; Mandeville's "Voyages," black letter, rare edition, printed at Lyon by Chaussart, £7 5s.; Greek Psalter, cut into, mentioned in catalogue published by Aldus in 1498, £8 15s.; "Album of Autographs," the correspondence of J. R. Planche, the dramatist, in two volumes—£10; complete set of etchings and woodcuts from Cruikshank's "Comic Almanack" and duplicate set, £12; second folio Shakespeare, imperfect, £9 5s.; Froissart's "Les Croniques de France," etc., four volumes in three, black letter, circa 1510, £8 10s.; Beaumont and Fletcher, Dyce edition, £9 5s.; Bewick's "Birds," first edition, large paper, £6; Turner's "Pictorial Views," largest paper, £30.